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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 4098  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 2108  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1578  
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SUBJECT: Jordan Lifts Restrictions on U.S. Beef

Refs: A) 07 Amman 930  
B) 06 Amman 5952

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11. (U) Action Request for USDA/FSIS in paragraph 7.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Government of Jordan (GOJ) has removed all product-specific restrictions on U.S. beef imports after over two years of discussions with the USG (reftels). The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has adopted the new World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) risk-based code on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). This significant decision is an important step for removing trade barriers and increasing opportunities for U.S. imports into Jordan. The MoA has requested that USDA/FSIS develop a mutually accepted animal health certificate that meets international standards. END SUMMARY.

#### Background on Restrictions

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13. (SBU) Between March 22 and June 17, 2006, the GOJ stopped issuing import licenses for U.S. beef due to reports of the discovery of a second case of BSE in Alabama. After consultations with Emboffs, the GOJ lifted the ban for a period of months but then instituted regulations that limited certain types of U.S. beef imports into Jordan, including all bone-in beef, minced, ground and heat treated bovine meat. MoA officials justified the ban based on a misinterpretation of the U.S. being categorized as BSE controlled risk under the OIE code and Jordan's inability to test non-lean beef for the presence of BSE.

14. (SBU) Post engaged the MoA, the Jordanian Food and Drug Administration, and the Ministry of Health at the highest levels to reconsider this decision, noting it had no scientific basis and violated the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and WTO commitments. During the U.S. - Jordan FTA Joint Committee meeting in October 2008, progress was made on the issue due to an enthusiastic MoA representative, Solaiman Al Rkaibat. Rkaibat participated in a 2008 International Visitors' Program (IVP) on "U.S. Trade Policy," which he credited for giving him a better understanding of different trade enhancing systems in agriculture. Since that time, FAS Amman and MoA worked together to gain acceptance at different institutional levels to remove any unjustified restriction on U.S. beef.

Agriculture Ministry Lifts U.S. Beef Restrictions

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¶5. (U) On February 11, 2009, the GoJ notified the World Trade Organization's Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (notification number G/SPS/N/Jor/19) that all countries categorized as "negligible and controlled BSE risk are likely to be eligible to export bovine meat and meat products to Jordan." The notification was based on a new interpretation of the OIE risk-based code taken by an interagency Jordanian BSE Committee on October 19, 2008 according to OIE regulations (articles 11.6.3, 11.6.4, 11.6.6, 11.6.7 and 11.6.8 of Terrestrial Animal Health Code).

¶6. (U) The MoA began issuing unrestricted import licenses for U.S. beef and beef products on February 10, 2009. The MoA notified the Embassy on February 16 that it was also ready to discuss a new USDA animal health certificate. NOTE: Import licenses are currently being issued on the basis of the old USDA health certificates. MOA will continue to accept these old certificates until a new one is agreed upon. END NOTE.

¶7. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: This is a significant step forward in removing trade barriers and increasing opportunities for U.S. imports into Jordan. The GOJ has requested that USDA/FSIS propose an animal health certificate that includes all items listed in this decision and meets international standards. Post urges USDA/FSIS to respond with an initial proposal as quickly as possible on this matter.

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Beecroft